Photograph by Otto Storch

Joan Kennedy with her children . . . Kara, 10 Patrick, 2½ Teddy, Jr., 8

JOAN KENNEDY'S STORY

BY BETTY HANNAH HOFFMAN

Rain was falling fiercely as Joan Kennedy and I drove past the mailbox with no name into a long, curving driveway and down to the Kennedys' ranch-style home in McLean, Va. As we parked, a boy with orange hair, pursued by an older girl with a look of motherly concern on her face, darted out of the gray-shingled house. They were Patrick Kennedy, 2½, and his sister Kara, 10. Later I would meet Edward Kennedy, Jr., 8—Teddy—before he left to play with his cousin Christopher, Ethel Kennedy's son, at Ethel's home two miles away. (To Joan, her husband, Sen. Edward M. Kennedy of Massachusetts, is always "Ted," never "Teddy"; they reserve the diminutive for their son.)

Our arrival at Joan's home was the start of an amazing, continuing interview, one that would elicit many of the very private, very candid thoughts of this Kennedy wife who in the last seven years has seen two of her husband's brothers assassinated and her husband himself suffer an accident that nearly ended his life—and another that nearly ended his political career.

As Joan and I took off our coats in the foyer, with its well-worn Turkish rug, the children disappeared down a corridor. Joan's eyes followed them lovingly. "Washington's a wonderful place for them to grow up," she mused, "although I have more feeling for Boston."

It was polite chit-chat. Later, however, Joan Kennedy talked revealingly about peace of mind, privacy, and her fears for her husband's life. Later, she told me with compelling sincerity, "I never wanted Ted to be President. Never. I still don't want him to be!" Later, too, as we discussed Chappaquiddick, she said with quiet dignity, "I believe everything Ted said. I believe in giving him all the support I can."

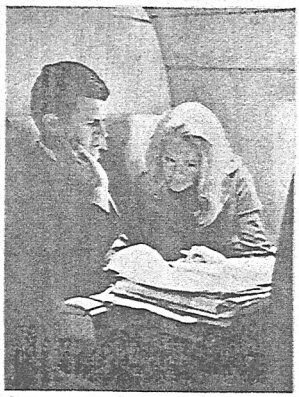
But perhaps we should start at the beginning.

Joan Kennedy obviously enjoys her spacious Virginia home, which took a year to build and reportedly cost $500,000. ("That's not a bad estimate," Joan says, "if you include the cost of the land, the house, and

all the furnishings!") Before moving into the house, she and Senator Kennedy rented furnished homes in the Georgetown district of Washington while Joan studied architectural styles and interiors with a curator from the National Gallery of Art. Once she decided upon the period she liked—Early American—she began collecting pieces at auctions and antique shops and stored them in a warehouse.

She gave me a rapid tour of the house, her mod outfit of black simulated lizard jumper, high black boots and clinging white jersey shirt contrasting strangely with the mellow antiques. Her chunky heels clicked over the dark, highly polished oak planks of her dining room floor. The small, square dining table is a replica of one Jackie Kennedy used to have in the upstairs family dining room in the White House, she explained. A handsome breakfront holds fragile Lowestoft, Staffordshire and Sandwich glass, and a gleaming cherrywood cradle, one of Joan's treasured finds, is filled with earth and green, growing ferns.

For large groups, the Kennedys use the yellow drawing room with its Steinway piano and vaulted ceiling; the room looks as if it could hold a *(continued on page 96)*



Joan on trip with Ted. Right: in her den, with its silver fox pillows.

Photograph above by Ken Regan, right by Otto Stupakoff

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hundred guests comfortably. Fifty-foot sliding glass doors frame a striking view of tall, graceful trees and the narrow, rushing Potomac River far below. It is an airy, inviting room with accents of salmon pink and citrus yellow. Plump white sofas and chairs form intimate conversation groups, and from every flat surface smile dozens of Kennedys in color photos.

One wall of the house is conspicuously bare—and will be until Joan makes up her mind about modern art. "We can't afford great American painters like Wyeth, Ryder or Hopper," she says candidly. "I don't know much about modern art, but I think perhaps I'll rent a few canvases and try them out."

"You can't afford great American painters?" I exclaimed. "But Joan, the Kennedys are millionaires!"

Conglomerate wealth

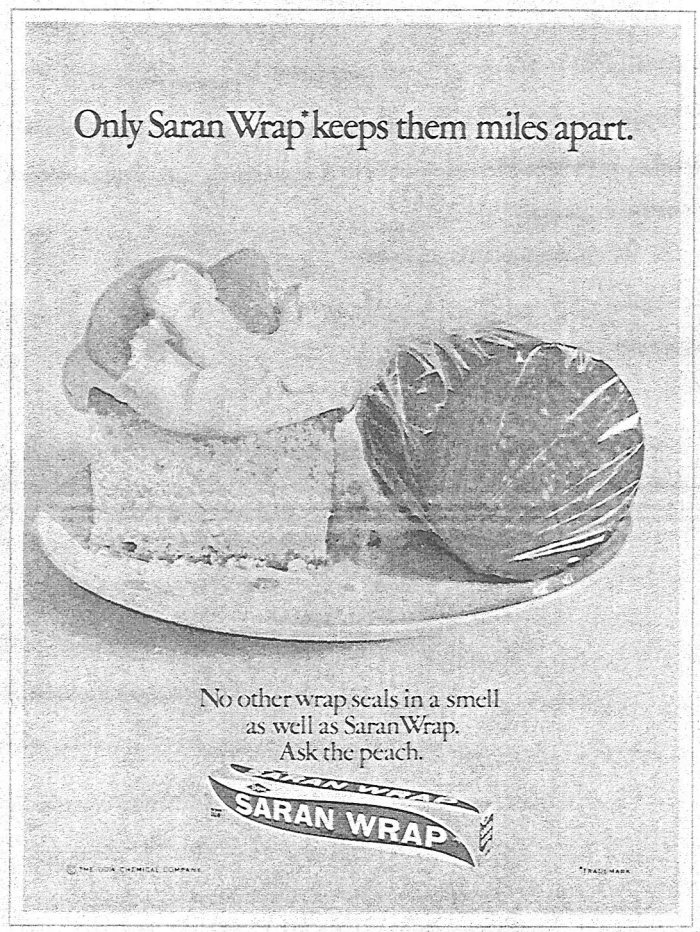
Joan laughed. "It's greatly exaggerated," she said. "Oh, I won't try to tell you the Kennedy family isn't rich. But much of what's been written about is conglomerate wealth. I mean, we really don't have the use of all that money. It's in trust funds. Actually, it costs Ted money to be a United States Senator."

When I asked Joan how much Ted makes as a Senator, she had to admit that *she didn't know.* "I think they voted themselves an increase recently, didn't they?" she said. (Actually, a U.S. Senator earns $42,500 a year. Senator Kennedy gives his salary to charity.)

Joan's household staff includes a gardener who also serves as a butler, a French cook who used to work for the Duchess of Windsor, a young Irish governess, a full-time social secretary, and a cleaning woman three days a week. "I'm lucky to have such wonderful household help," Joan said, whisking me through the nursery, with its adjoining kitchenette, the brightly decorated children's rooms and the nurse's quarters. "Knowing things are being run so smoothly gives me the freedom to be what I think a Senator's wife ought to be. It gives me time to keep up with the news, and it gives me time to play with the children, to enjoy their company instead of having to do housework.

"When I have to be away from home, I can go with an easy mind, and when we entertain, there's a staff to prepare everything. Instead of rushing around at the last moment, I'm fortunate enough to be able to take half an hour to read up on our special guests."

When Ted first entered the Senate in 1963 at the age of 30, he was its youngest member. Now he has risen to Number 50 on Washington's protocol lists. "When we go out, I'm often seated next to the host or some guest of honor," explains Joan, who says she meets "terribly interesting men" in this manner. One of her recent dinner partners was Prince Souvanna Phouma of Laos. Beforehand, Joan read a briefing paper on Laos prepared for her by Ted's staff—"but I barely learned how to pronounce Prince Souvanna's name before all sorts of trouble broke out in Laos."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Joan led me next to the master suite, a separate wing containing what she called "our only luxury," separate bathrooms for her and Ted. "Well, it's not really my *only* luxury," she added. "We had stereo equipment built into the house, but I've got a separate, special system that pipes music into my bedroom and dressing room. I love to listen to 'happy' music in the morning, and one of the first things I do when I wake up is put on records. Ted and I don't always agree on my morning music. Sometimes he says, 'Joansie, not *that* again!'"

The large bedroom, with its open balcony and river view, also overlooks a fenced play yard. "Sometimes our governess spends four or five days in New York, and then I look after Patrick," Joan explains. "I just love being with him. I missed so much of Kara's and Teddy's babyhood while I was campaigning."

The bedroom Joan and Ted share has a graceful white desk, pink love-seat and chairs, a draped pink and green canopy over the king-sized bed, and a pale pink puff. "Ted has to be away so much that he told me to go ahead and decorate this room any way I liked," Joan explained, kneeling on the pale green rug to light a fire in the grate. I remembered that she gave me practically the same explanation about the pink master bedroom in their Hyannisport summer place when I interviewed her for the JOURNAL eight years ago.

Three fat manila envelopes rested on a table near the bed; they were marked "Urgent," "Not So Urgent" and "Bills." Joan tries to acknowledge every communication she and Ted receive. In times of crisis, the mail can reach carload proportions.

I'd enjoy cut flowers more if I weren't so worried about them dying. —Poor Woman's Almanac

Another of Joan's responsibilities is to pay the household bills for their Boston, Hyannisport and Washington homes. Each house has two telephone lines, "so that means six phone bills a month," Joan sighed, adding that she goes over every item.

The small, white telephone by the bedside rang and Joan picked it up. "It's Ted calling from New York," she told me after a moment. While she spoke with her husband, I studied a photo of Joan's family on her desk. Her father, Harry Bennett, a former top executive with several big New York advertising firms, was wearing an open-necked, short-sleeved sports shirt in the photo—a big, handsome, affable-looking man. His wife, auburn-haired and smiling animatedly, stood arrow-straight and slim beside his chair. I also noticed on the desk several photos of Joan's sister Candy, who is a brunette version of Joan. (Candy is married to Robert McMurrey, an attorney in Houston.)

"Are you catching the ten o'clock back?" Joan was asking Ted, and then, "Oh." They spoke a bit longer and finally she hung up with a "'Bye, honey." It seems Ethel had "borrowed" Ted to escort her to a Robert F. Kennedy memorial dinner in New York. Ted had three appointments there early the next day, so he would have to remain for the night, "although he'd rather fly home."

We sat together by the fire while a Simon and Garfunkel record played softly on the stereo, the rain drummed steadily against the glass walls, and afternoon deepened into night.

I thought back to my first JOURNAL interview with Joan in 1962. She was only 25 at the time, a sweet, natural, unaffected golden girl, openly adoring her husband and babies. Watching her two children frolic in the warm Cape Cod sunshine that summer day, Joan confided that both she and Ted wanted as many babies as Ethel, who had eight at the time (she now has 11). But during the intervening eight years, Joan has borne only one child, Patrick, and has suffered three miscarriages. In 1963, John F. Kennedy was assassinated in Dallas; within five years, Robert F. Kennedy met the same fate in Los Angeles. Then, in 1969, Ambassador Kennedy died a lingering death after suffering a stroke in 1961. Ted, the ninth child and baby of the family, suddenly found himself the sole surviving male member of the Kennedy dynasty.

Ted himself narrowly missed death in a plane crash in a Massachusetts apple orchard one foggy June night in 1964, as he was about to run for his second term in the Senate. When the accident hospitalized him for six months, Joan filled in for him at rallies and meetings. Two years earlier, Ted had won the right to serve the unexpired portion of his brother John's Senate term by getting 55 percent of the vote. In 1964, with Joan campaigning, "I got five times as many votes," Ted says with understandable hyperbole. Actually, he received 74 percent of the vote.

In the spring of 1968, Joan stumped through Indiana and Oregon on her own for Bobby, then joined the Kennedy caravan in southern California. Following Robert Kennedy's death, when Ted withdrew from public life temporarily and Joan told friends privately that she feared for his health and safety, she again took his place and campaigned for his friends in Iowa, Massachusetts, and Indiana.

One of those friends was Sen. Birch Bayh of Indiana. Bayh and his wife Marvella were in the plane with Ted the night of the 1964 crash.

"It wasn't easy for Joan to return to Indiana in the fall of '68, after working there in the spring for Bobby," says Marvella Bayh. "She would tell her audiences, 'I want to say thank you for the Kennedy family, and I ask you to send Birch Bayh back to the Senate.' Thanks to Joan's support, Birch was the only Democrat to win on the statewide slate; in that same election, Nixon took Indiana by the largest margin he carried any state."

"We avoided the White House"

But now, as we talked in her home, Joan Kennedy's thoughts were not of that Senate race. Her mind was on 1962, the year we had first met.

"So much rode on Ted's race for the Senate that year," she recalled, "including President Kennedy's prestige. So many people accused Ted of riding on his brother's coattails. That first year in Washington, both Ted and I were feeling our way, trying to make good impressions. We avoided the White House like the plague. I think we only went to dinner there once or twice—and then in the small family dining room upstairs. Which is sad, considering that it was the only year we spent in Washington while Jack was President."

1963 was the year of Joan and Ted's fifth wedding anniversary, and she decided to give her first large formal party. She chose a Friday night close to her wedding date and engaged an orchestra and a caterer for a sit-down dinner for members of her wedding party.

One of Ted's aides phoned early in the afternoon the day of the party to say that President Kennedy had been shot, that the Senator was flying to Hyannisport to break the news to his parents. Like millions of other Americans, Joan sank down in front of television in horrified disbelief. All thoughts of the anniversary party fled her mind until the caterers began to arrive with food and drink.

"As it happened, I'm glad they did. I called off the party, but people kept drifting in all evening long. We were the closest Kennedys to Washington, with Bobby and Ethel in McLean and the [Sargent] Shrivers in Maryland. Our friends wanted to comfort us and to be comforted. I didn't feel as though I could go shut myself upstairs in my room and cry."

Joan spoke about what a difficult week that was for all the Kennedys. "Bobby's birthday was that week. John (John F. Kennedy, Jr.) turned three the day of the funeral, and Caroline was six just two days later."

Joan had miscarried in May of that year; the following June, just two weeks before Ted's near-fatal plane crash, she lost another unborn child. In August 1968, a month after Chappaquiddick, she suffered a third miscarriage. When I asked how large a family she wants now, Joan bent her head and her chin trembled. When she spoke again, her soft, breathy voice was scarcely audible. "Losing the second child was . . . especially disappointing for me—and Ted, too. Kara and Teddy came along right after we were married and we thought the rest would come with no trouble. This house was planned to be expandable. We're still hoping to have more."

What else does Joan want for herself—and for Ted?

She sighed. "I wish I knew the answer to that, but I don't. I'm still trying to find out as best I can. I suppose I would like more (*continued*)

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peace of mind and more privacy for us. Especially peace of mind. Frankly, I worry all the time about whether Ted will be shot like Jack and Bobby. I try not to, but I can't help myself. Ted tries to keep things from me—serious threats against his life, that kind of news—but I know what's going on. Ted doesn't want me to worry. But I do. And I know he worries about it, too. Ted is a brave man, but he is only human. You want to hear something awful? A few months ago we were in a plane and a child exploded a balloon right behind us. It sounded just like a gun shot. Ted jumped so. What a terrible thing! A balloon pops and my husband thinks he's being shot. I could read his mind—and I could have cried for him.

"It's odd, but my fears for Ted's life really didn't start when Jack and Bob were killed—at least not consciously. They began—and I remember it quite clearly—while I was watching the 1968 Democratic National Convention in Chicago. I saw all the violence—the demonstrations, the clubbings, the bloodshed, the confusion, all those uncontrolled and uncontrollable people. I have always loved political campaigning. It is an exhilarating experience—all that love and cheering.

"I got scared"

"But as I watched the convention on TV, I saw how easily that love could turn into hate, how that exhilarating experience could become so very frightening. I got very, very scared at the thought of Ted being thrown into that—and I guess I'm still scared. I simply can't get it off my mind. What's the answer? I don't know. You can't hide. Well, you can, I suppose, but Ted won't. Quit politics? No. Public service means too much to Ted; it's what he has chosen for himself, and I don't think he can be frightened off. This is such a painful subject with us that we can't even discuss it. But we both know it's there.

"And then there are the children. Patrick is too little to ask questions, and Kara isn't the type to ask them—although I know they're inside her head. Teddy is the one who asks. He wants to know why all these things happened to Uncle Jack and Uncle Bobby, and will they happen to Daddy, too? What do you tell an 8-year-old when he asks you why that man shot his uncle? I tell him he was just a bad man who didn't know Uncle Bobby, that there is something wrong with a man who would shoot somebody he didn't even know. Teddy accepts my answers, but he is quite aware of the risks involved—as aware as a child his age can be."

I had stopped taking notes. I simply sat and listened to what this remarkably candid woman was saying—understanding, yet knowing that I could not fully understand.

"I never wanted Ted to be President. Never!" Joan said emphatically. "I still don't want him to be. I don't think Ted has ever wanted to be President, either. Of course, I won't discourage him if he wants to run. A man's work is his life. I believe that.

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"I want Ted to be happy in his work and thus in his life. He has said he will not run in 1972, and it's foolish to speculate beyond that. Would he make a good President? I haven't even given it thought, although I'm sure Ted would be a good anything he really wanted to be. I think he's a great Senator. But I don't want to theorize on what I hope and pray won't ever happen.

"And all this you hear about the Kennedy family pressuring Ted to run for President . . ." Joan was now speaking with tremendous feeling. "What family? What's left of the Kennedys? Besides Ted, only women and children! You don't seriously think we want Ted to be President, do you? To have the one Kennedy man left risk having happen to him what happened to his brothers?" Joan shook her head in a vigorous no. "You think all those children—Ethel's, mine—would be better off if . . .? No, we don't want him to run for President. We want him. We need him. Ted knows the Kennedys are not pushing him toward it. He is quite aware of how we feel."

Like many political leaders, Ted frequently must be away from home. Is Joan lonely when he isn't there? "No, not really," she said. "To be alone isn't to be lonely. Some nights I just go to the piano and play for two or three hours—Debussy, Chopin. The house is so quiet, all you can hear is the piano. Music relaxes me much more than total silence. And we have all of Shakespeare's plays on records. Some nights I just stretch out and listen to them."

Joan also reads for pleasure. "Mainly best sellers, especially historical books. I loved *Jennie*, *Nicholas and Alexandra*, and Irving Stone's *Those Who Love*. I've been to almost all of the places Stone mentions. I found *Portnoy's Complaint* rather boring. Most recently, I read Rollo May's book, *Love and Will*, and re-read Anne Morrow Lindbergh's *Gift from the Sea*."

Joan paused. "Would you like to join me for supper?" she asked, and we moved into the formal drawing room. "This is fun," she said, perching with childlike delight on a white damask sofa as the maid brought in a tray with our hamburger, spinach and mashed potatoes, served with a glass of white wine. "I never get to eat in this room," she admitted.

Joan hasn't really cooked for Ted since their first year of marriage, "when I tried every cookbook published." Last winter, when they were skiing at Vail, Colo., and living in a condominium, they ate some home-cooked meals. "Ted cooked," Joan says sheepishly.

A strict mother

Kara, in her nightrobe, was in the adjoining purple-and-blue plaid study, watching television with Patrick. She interrupted us once to ask if she could invite a friend over the following day. "Since it's a school holiday, yes," Joan said. The phone rang and Joan jumped up, saying, "That will be word saying Teddy will be ten minutes late. I said he had to be back by eight. My family teases me about being so strict."

She returned in a few minutes, looking worried. "Teddy has a cut under his eye. They were rough-housing. The governess wants to take him over to the hospital. She says it might take one to five stitches. I said I'd go but she said no, she could judge the situation better. She's a registered nurse and was with me in the delivery room when Teddy was born. Stitches. . . ." Her blue eyes clouded.

When I assured her that all young boys seem to need stitches at some time or another, she relaxed but ate little. "Our children are seldom sick," she said, "and they've never broken any bones. I have strict rules, but they seem to work. They're happy children. Once Teddy had a friend overnight and they got into a pillow fight. I put them into separate rooms. They objected, but the next morning the friend thanked me. He said he had been very tired the night before and really needed his sleep."

Young Patrick trotted in wearing a turquoise flannel belted bathrobe, and regarded us with piercing blue eyes. Although hardly old enough to make himself understood, he managed to find out where Daddy was, whether there would be a hide-and-seek game that night, what happened to Teddy's eye and why his *(continued)*

mother had not touched her spinach.

"After supper, Ted turns out the lights in this room and the children hide under the tables," Joan explained. "I had to remove all my fragile Lowestoft and anchor all my other things with heavy lucite bases."

"Where," I inquired, "did Patrick get that orange hair? You're blonde and the Senator has brown hair . . ."

"Everybody asks us that," Joan said with a laugh, "and we didn't know the answer till last winter, when Ted caught pneumonia. While he was recuperating, he let his beard grow—and sure enough, it came in reddish."

Within a half hour, Teddy returned, wearing a patch of adhesive under one eye and escorted by the registered nurse and a young governess from Ethel's household. No stitches had been deemed necessary, the nurse reported, and Teddy had been "very brave." Joan hugged him several times in relief. As the women were leaving, one told Joan, "Mrs. Kennedy, Christopher just loves to come to your house. It's so quiet and peaceful here."

Joan blushed with pleasure. "Ted makes a special effort with Jack and Bobby's sons," she said, closing the front door. "The summer Bobby died, Ted flew to Spain with Joe and then flew back there at the end of the summer to pick him up. Last summer, Jack's son John visited us at Hyannisport. He and Teddy sailed the late President's boat together. Ted also used John as a fifth crew member in club races as often as he could."

"I admire Jackie"

John Kennedy, Jr., is a "very sweet" child, Joan said, adding that he and Caroline "have come through their trying experiences very well." As for Jackie Onassis, "I admire her more and more. I've only met Ari [Onassis] once, but he struck me as a person of great charm and fun to be with. People criticize Jackie for going her own way where the Kennedys are concerned, but this family can be overwhelming. For years I went along with everything they said because I didn't dare to do otherwise, but now I speak up and say what I think and it seems to work out better for everyone."

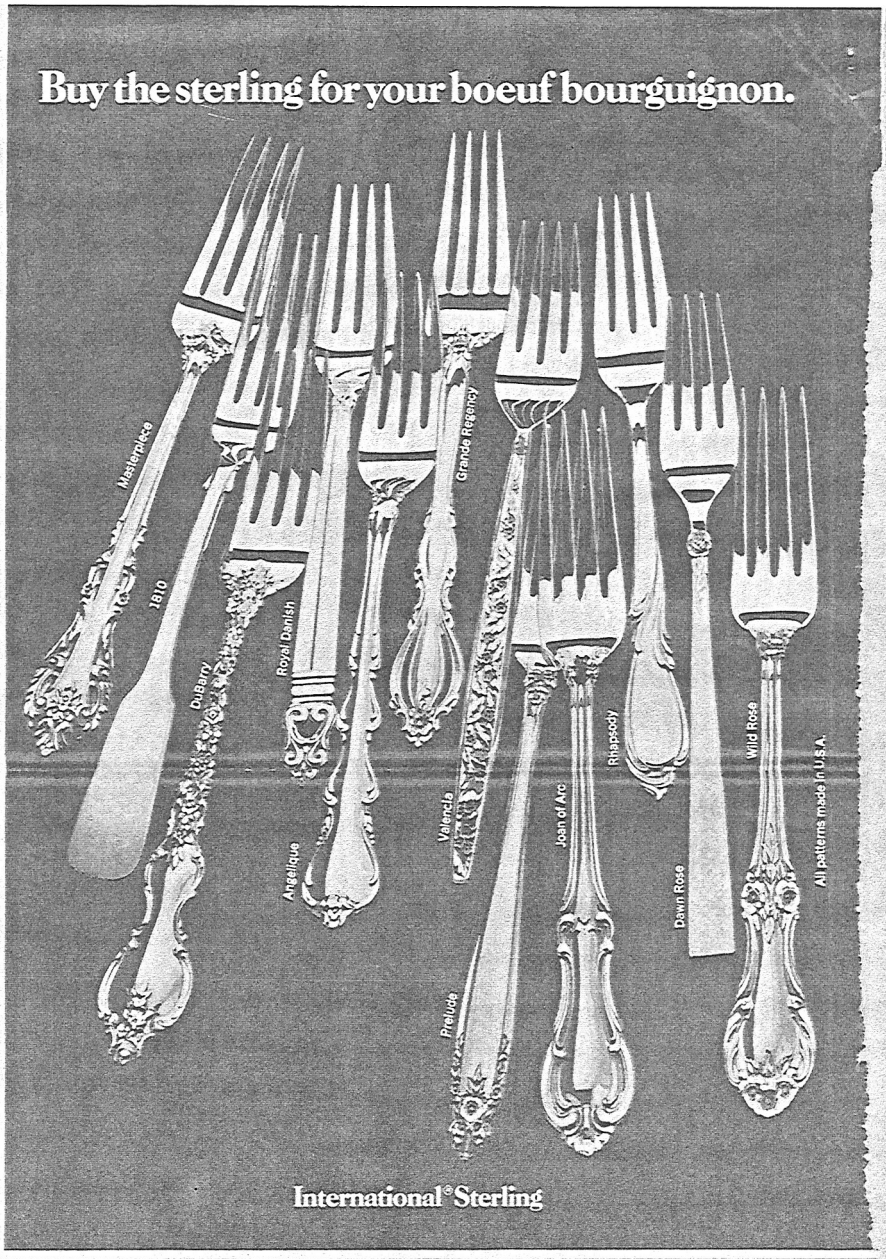
She went off to hear the children's prayers. When she returned, we took up our conversation in the great white drawing room with all its Kennedy ghosts. ("Ghosts? No," Joan said. "People we love!")

Joan spoke about Bobby. The news of his assassination reached her in Paris, where she was staying with the Shrivers after dedicating a John F. Kennedy Memorial Forest in Ireland. Eunice Kennedy Shriver, Bob's sister, was supposed to pay a formal call on Madame De Gaulle that afternoon. Joan accompanied her, to lend moral support. Then she flew to New York to join Ted, who was helping Ethel Kennedy arrange the funeral services at St. Patrick's Cathedral.

"Ted didn't sleep for two whole days and nights," Joan recalls. "I worried about what the strain and pressure would do to him. There were so many decisions only he could make. He was being bombarded by them. And making decisions can drain you. The second night, Ted went into a room in our brother-in-law Steve Smith's apartment and wrote Bob's eulogy. I kept bringing him coffee and trying to do what I could. I don't think I have ever seen Ted work harder at anything.

"What has happened in our lives, the tragedies, has brought Ted and me closer to each other. When we were married, we loved each other, but we didn't know that much about each other. Most newlyweds don't. Now we know our good and bad traits; we have seen one another at rock bottom—and we still love each other. Many people won't let those they love, really know them, because they're afraid that if they show their true selves they won't be loved. I think it's good to know that you'll still be loved in spite of yourself, in spite of your faults. All the terrible things we've been through have made me more aware that Ted has needs just like everybody else. He needs me. He needs his family. He needs human closeness.

"I think the same is true of me," Joan continued. "I cherish my girl friends more than I ever did. Anything you care about you have to work at. I work at staying close to a few friends in Washington and Boston. These are friends to whom I can and do tell almost everything. Most of them are friends from my days at Manhattanville College. I think this has been my big discovery of the last



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few years—that I have a need for close relationships; I hadn't realized it before. It was usually fun-and-games relationships with me, I guess. People were pals, buddies, but not real friends. Now I know I want and need beautiful, continuing, intimate relationships."

It was growing late and there was still one question I had to ask, although I hadn't been able to decide how to frame it. Finally, I blurted:

"Joan, how about Chappaquiddick?"

She was quiet for a long moment, obviously weighing her words.

"In following you around," I offered, "I've met most of the men who were at that party on Chappaquiddick. They hardly seem like the type that would . . ."

"Yes," she said, in a rush of words, "you've seen what kind of men they are. For example, Jack Crimmins is a bachelor in his sixties—he's practically a member of the family, we've known him so long. As for the girls they invited to that party on Chappaquiddick, I know them all. When I wasn't on the road campaigning for Bobby, I'd often stop by his headquarters on L Street in Washington to say hello and to tell them how much their efforts were appreciated. Many nights they worked until midnight.

"They were all smart, hard-working, dedicated girls, all crazy about Bobby. They shared his ideals. When you're all working on a campaign together, you become very close," she continued. "After Bobby died, we kept in touch with his office staff, even after they found other jobs. Ted and I invited the girls, along with some other friends and staff people, to at least two cook-outs at Hyannisport; another time, we took them sailing on Ted's boat. It was a way to say thank you."

Yes, she said, she had known Mary Jo Kopechne, the girl who drowned in the car Ted was driving. Joan considered her "an exceptionally nice girl, very idealistic."

Joan explained why she had not gone to the party on Chappaquiddick. "For the past six or seven years, Ted has sailed in the Edgartown Regatta. It's a fun regatta with lots of boats in the same class as his. He always wants to do well in the race. I crew for Ted every weekend in the club races at Hyannisport, but they're only about two hours long. The Edgartown Regatta takes six or seven hours. It's a man's race. I went once and it was pretty rugged. Also, I was two months' pregnant last July and taking it easy. I knew about the party they planned to have afterwards—it's traditional after sailing races—and that Joe Gargan had rented a small cottage because, on Martha's Vineyard, Ted's always recognized wherever he goes.

"Ted phoned me that Friday, after the race was finished, and told me, 'We came in fourth.' I knew how disappointed he must have felt. He's come close to winning so many times and never quite made it, and Ted always wants to win."

Agonizing moments

She rose again and stirred the fire. I thought there was a haunted look in her eyes. People are forever asking the Kennedys to relive agonizing moments.

"The next morning"—Joan seemed momentarily disconcerted when I asked her the precise hour—"no, I don't know exactly what time it was, but I was out of bed. Anyway, Ted phoned me again and said there had been a terrible accident and Mary Jo had drowned.

"Ted has seen death at close hand so often—Jack and Bob and his own plane crash and then his father, saddest of all in a way for Ted because he took so long to go." Now Joan's eyes were misted with tears. "I think it's a miracle Ted managed to get out of that car at Chappaquiddick. There was a ten-knot tide, it was pitch black, the car was upside down, and the water was swirling in. I think anyone under the circumstances would be in a confused state. It was a very brave thing for him to do, to keep diving down to rescue Mary Jo. I'm lucky he came out of it alive at all."

Does Joan believe the stories that Mary Jo and Ted were going for a midnight swim? "No, I'm sure they weren't. Ted left the party early so he could get a good night's sleep and be ready for the next day's race."

She was sure that Ted would never let someone else take the blame for anything he had done. *(continued)*

If you look at a word long enough or say it over often enough, it doesn't seem to mean anything.
—Poor Woman's Almanac

but yes, he probably should have notified the police earlier.

Joan straightened her slender back and threw back her long, blonde hair. "I believe everything Ted said. I believe in giving him all the support I can. I don't believe in bugging him, in saying, 'Why did you say that?' Or, 'Why didn't you do this?' It was very unfortunate . . . a tragic accident. . . .

"When you're in public life you have to take risks and chances," she went on quietly. "The things that happened to Jack and Bobby couldn't be anticipated, couldn't be avoided. In a way, Mary Jo's death was even worse for Ted because it involved someone outside the family."

We talked a bit about other things and then I stood up to leave. Joan offered to drive me back to my Georgetown hotel because "so many of Ted's young aides go to classes at night that I hate to ask them."

She chatted cheerfully during the 15-minute trip. Her resilience amazed me. I was thinking what courage it must have taken for her to narrate *Peter and the Wolf* with the Boston Symphony just three weeks after Chappaquiddick.

Where does Joan derive her strength? Not from any ambition to become an actress or a concert musician or a full-time politician; she enjoys the richness and variety of her present life too much for that. "I'm too busy living from day to day to think about what I'll do in ten years," she says.

Duty and public service

She doesn't talk about her religion, nor does she go to Mass daily as Ethel and Rose Kennedy do, yet prayer is a part of Joan's everyday life. She relishes her children, her home, her too infrequent moments with Ted, and she believes wholeheartedly in the old-fashioned concepts of duty and public service. "You try to do the things you ought to do and think are right," she said.

I think Joan Kennedy is a beautiful woman, inside and out. Events that might have made a lesser person sour, bitter or panicky seem to have helped her to blossom and mature. She tries so valiantly. She wants to be everything a loving wife and mother should be. At the same time, I sense, she does not want to be just Mrs. Ted Kennedy; she wants to be a person in her own right.

I feel that Joan loves Ted with a deep, abiding, all-forgiving love that has been put to the test. What he wants, she wants. Her attachment to him seems all the more poignant when you hear her say that the painful images of Jackie and Ethel cradling their mortally wounded Kennedy men are never very far from her mind.

Naturally, Joan shows occasional signs of stress and strain. She would be inhuman if she didn't. She is a sensitive, vulnerable person with strong emotions that run close to the surface. But she is learning to be disciplined, both in her daily activities and in controlling her feelings.

She seems more reflective. She seldom rushes. She doesn't smoke, drinks little, eats small portions of food (she stands 5'7" and weighs only 118 pounds), exercises regularly (20 laps of her heated, outdoor pool daily from late April to Thanksgiving), but otherwise she tries to conserve her strength, which is not quite as bountiful as that of some of the extraordinarily zestful Kennedys.

She is unfailingly considerate of other people and grateful for the smallest favors done her. She is not a pretentious intellectual, but she is bright, articulate and increasingly self-confident as sad memories begin to recede.

While I was in McLean, I asked Ted Kennedy, "How do you feel Joan has changed in the last eight years?"

"Oh," he replied with embarrassment, shuffling the papers on top of his black briefcase, "we'll get around to that later." Then, in response to a look from Joan, who seemed to be seeking some sort of a verbal commitment from her husband, he added, as she blushed a bright pink, "I will say she comes across more beautifully than ever."

I think so, too. END

Next month, in the concluding installment of Joan Kennedy's story, reporter Betty Hannah Hoffman goes on a campaign tour with Joan and Ted—and learns at firsthand why it's both "frightening" and "exhilarating" to be a Kennedy.

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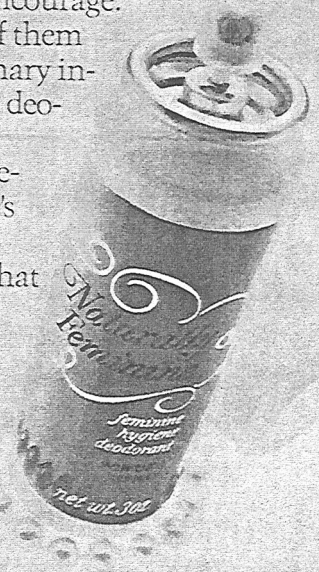
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